

House Republican Press Release

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REP. WARD CALLS ON LAWMAKERS TO TAKE UP EMINENT DOMAIN IN VETO SESSION



HARTFORD – House Republican Minority Leader Robert M. Ward today presented legislation to ban the seizing of private property for any economic development projects and urged lawmakers to take up the issue in the mandatory veto session this summer.

The session has not yet been scheduled but will likely take place within a month.

The North Branford Republican, the leading proponent of protecting property owners' rights in the legislature, drafted the legislation in response to last week's U.S. Supreme Court decision involving New London.

"We have an obligation as elected officials to protect the rights of property owners and we must act swiftly before more rights are trampled upon to accommodate some developer looking to make a profit," Ward said. The legislation Ward is proposing simply deletes six lines from existing state statutes that currently allow development agencies to seize private property under eminent domain.

"This is not complicated as some opponents have suggested. Other states acted in this manner while the Supreme Court case was pending. The question is, do you stand with powerful government agencies and rich developers or with individual property owners who don't want to lose their homes," Ward said.

Ward's legislation would permit the taking of private property for public benefit, such as the construction of roads, schools or other municipal and state building projects, or to eliminate truly blighted areas which present public hazards or safety concerns.

On March 7 a public hearing on legislation to restrict the use of eminent domain in taking of property was conducted at the Capitol but the bill never made it out of the Judiciary Committee because of Democratic opposition.

During the special session that concluded this week several Democratic leaders blocked passage of a version of Ward's bill saying that it was too hasty to act upon such a critical issue.

"We can and must take this action now. This legislation is consistent with what other states have done," Ward added.

He will also take part in a rally on the steps of New London City Hall on Tuesday evening to call attention to the New London case. Seven homeowners in the Fort Trumbull neighborhood have resisted efforts to evict them from their homes and they challenged the taking all the way to the Supreme Court.